

Editorial

Turmoil, change and professional education in the field

At the time this issue of the journal was being put together the world found itself, yet again, in a state of upheaval and turmoil. From late 2010 and early 2011 popular uprisings have grown across the Middle East and North Africa, with governments, regimes and dictators challenged and sometimes overthrown. Currently, Western nations, under the auspices of the United Nations, are engaged in distant conflicts, this time in Libya. It may be questioned what these political events have to do with the journal. The answer is perhaps simple. Health, social welfare and justice, education and other public services are integral parts of nations and their reconstitution. This is obvious, perhaps, in respect of the immediate health care needs of victims of violence and conflict, but is also part of the medium and longer term concern for housing, work, health care and social welfare for those affected in some way by conflicts. Civilised society responds to its citizens' needs and rebuilding nations require those public and NGO services to continue their work within those societies. It is often the social welfare, health and education professionals who add a sense of the indigenous knowledge and continuity which help make those changes authentic and appropriate to nations re-developing the lives and futures of citizens. These professionals may have learned in universities and 'on the job', but a central feature of many countries' professional education is to ensure people are assisted to learn in the field. As we recognise the impact of global change and its significance to local conditions and lives, this role will be increasingly important.

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The papers in this issue stem from social work, part of which, of course, is concerned with international development. There is a focus on assessment issues relating to portfolio development in Heron, Lerpiniere

and Church's paper and on the importance of supervision in learning in Howie and MacSporran's piece. These papers are designed to enhance the learning experience and assessment from student perspectives, which is complemented well by Warren, Thomas, Keen, Rutter, Fenge and Brown, who look at the significance of the end-user – the client, service user, or whatever nomenclature is used. Of course, not everyone can undertake the role, and Dove and Skinner consider the effects of early placement breakdown, so important to maintaining standards in professional practice and ensuring that people who do use social work get the best possible service. Finally, all important to practice learning and field education, and transferring this to the complex, often conflictual world of qualified practice is Ixer's return to the slippery totem 'reflection'; something that is critical as we respond to violence in the world and, hopefully, post-violence re-development.

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